ANTHROPOLOGY

Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword.* London, 1947. Secker and Warburg. Price 12s. 6d.

RUTH BENEDICT'S study of Japanese patterns of culture is not primarily concerned with questions of eugenics; but she makes passing reference to certain perennial habits of the Japanese which are of indirect eugenic significance. We may welcome any information on how the Japanese have dealt with problems of population and limitation of families, for we cannot but look to Japan for help in solving one of the most serious long-term problems confronting the world to-day —the adjustment of the Asiatic population to its food supply.

The eugenist will find interesting material in Miss Benedict's account of how the Japanese base their society on the ideas of hierarchy and order through harmonious inequality. From the beginning of Japan's recorded history, her society has been rigidly stratified. Indeed, it was largely the unbending quality of her caste system which brought about the collapse of the legal and political institutions she had borrowed from China in the seventh century. She then made a valiant attempt to adopt in its entirety the brilliant civilization of T'ang China—took over its religion, its script, its system of government, its literary taste—but failed to reproduce what was in fact the essential basis of the entire structure—its casteless system. She could not sacrifice her own system of strictly hereditary aristocracy in favour of the Chinese system of bureaucracy based on competitive examination, and in consequence most of her borrowed institutions disintegrated or altered beyond all recognition.

" Japan's confidence in hierarchy," Miss Benedict writes, " is basic in her whole notion of man's relation to his fellow men and of man's relation to the State and it is only by describing some of their national institutions like the family, the State, religious and economic life, that it is possible for us to understand their view of life." One of the

most characteristic Japanese traits is the belief that each individual must "take his proper station." This obligation implies that behaviour is minutely prescribed, not only according to position on the social scale, but also to status within the family. Social relations can, in fact, be stated in terms of obligations. The Japanese is encompassed by an intricate network of obligations, and Miss Benedict makes an interesting distinction between those which must be repaid with mathematical equivalence and those of which one can never repay even one ten-thousandth. To this latter category belong the set of obligations on which are based the relationships between the members of a family—namely, the code of filial piety. Filial piety is, of course, the supreme virtue throughout the Far East. It became part of the Japanese ethic in the seventh century, when the Confucian classics were first brought to Japan from China. Indeed, the Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety, whose deeds of virtue are known to all Japanese children, are of Chinese origin. As an example of such ideally filial behaviour, we may cite the story of Roraishi, who, though himself aged 70, would sprawl on the floor dressed in baby's clothes in order to delude his parents, both aged 90, into believing that with such an infantile son they could not be so very old after all.

There are, however, important differences in the way in which this virtue has been applied in Japan and China. In China, filial piety is owed to the whole clan, which may number several thousands, and to all ancestors descended from a common forebear. Such clans are institutionalized by elaborate genealogies, showing the descent of each member of the clan from an original ancestor. In Japan filial piety is limited to the immediate family and to those ancestors who died within living memory. Chinese clan organization, based as it is on a common surname, was hardly possible in Japan, for it was only in the middle nineteenth century that people outside the Japanese aristocracy and the warrior class were allowed to use surnames. The upper classes in Japan did, it is true, keep genealogies, but on the contrary principle to those of the Chinese clans. The Japanese genealogies show how the present living person's ancestors stretch behind him like a fan or the spread tail of a peacock; the Chinese ones show how the descendents of an original ancestor stretch before him—like a pyramid, or a picture of Mount Fuji.

Miss Benedict mentions the final hardening of the caste system in Japan under the régime of the Tokugawas at the beginning of the seventeenth century. A strict separation of the five social classes by sumptuary and other kinds of legislation was a notable part of the policy of the Tokugawas in setting up a rigidly feudal society. The gulf between the warriors and the peasants was fixed especially widely. No peasant, it was decreed, could carry a sword, and no samurai could legally till the soil or practise any craft. He belonged to an almost entirely parasitic class, living on a fixed rice stipend drawn from taxes levied from the peasants on his lord's fief. The inadequacy of many of these fixed stipends and the precarious condition of the overtaxed farmers is implied in the interesting evidence that both social classes practised abortion and infanticide on a large scale. It is thought that the almost complete stability of the Japanese population figures between 1721 and 1848 was attained largely by such practices.

A peculiar feature of the Japanese caste system was its flexibility. Despite its seeming rigidity, it sanctioned certain arrangements, unknown, for instance, in India, by which the classes could intermarry. Such relaxations took the form of approved devices by which rich merchants could penetrate the samurai classes. A prosperous merchant could ensure samurai status for his descendents by arranging for his son to be adopted into an impoverished and sonless samurai family as the husband of the eldest daughter. The son would adopt his wife's name and his children would be of her social status. Purchase of land was another approved device by which a merchant gained sufficient prestige to enable him to marry his children into samurai families.

Miss Benedict mentions the static popu-

lation figures of the Tokugawa period, but does not explain the interesting source of this information—the partial population censuses instituted by the eighth Tokugawa Shōgun. Family registration had, indeed, existed in Japan since the seventh century A.D., when it was adopted with the other legal and political institutions of T'ang China. The Taihō laws (701-704 A.D.) lay down that a very minute census of the members of every family be taken and revised every six years. Children under three years of age are classed as "yellow"; those between three and 16 as "little"; those between 16 and 20 as "middling"; those between 20 and 60 as "able-bodied," and those over 60 as "infirm." It was the custom to preserve the census of every thirtieth year for purposes of record—and for deciding questions of lineage—which hitherto had been determined by the more primitive method of the boiling water ordeal.

Such censuses were abandoned during the civil wars of the medieval period, but at the beginning of the seventeenth century we find it enacted that all Buddhist and Shinto temples were to keep an accurate census of their parishioners—not, however, in the interests of demography, but in order to facilitate the extermination of Christianity. Anyone whose name did not appear on the registers was liable to crucifixion on the suspicion of embracing the alien faith. A census of tolerable accuracy, however, was not made until 1721, when the Shōgun decreed that a registration was to be made of all families except those of the Court nobles, the samurai, and the Eta or outcasts. In 1726 it was further decreed that such a census should be made every six years. Eighteen of these reports, covering the years 1721 to 1846, are extant, and though the figures are decidedly defective owing to duplications and omissions, they are sufficient to allow us to estimate that the population remained almost entirely stationary—at a level of between 28 and 30 million—during the whole of the period of 125 years.

CARMEN BLACKER.

HUMAN ANCESTRY

Gates, R. Ruggles, F.R.S. *Human Ancestry.* Harvard, 1948. London, Oxford University Press. Pp. xvi + 422. Price 42s.

THE problems of the descent of man continue to attract attention from various specialists in different lines. Not long ago Sir Arthur Keith gave us his long matured reflections based upon anatomical work with many of the skeletal remains in question. Now Dr. Ruggles Gates gives us the views of a geneticist. To him parallel evolution seems a vastly important fact in the whole realm of life. Gigantism appears again and again in amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, and leads to extinction. The line between reptiles and the earliest mammals and that between marsupials and placental mammals was "crossed on a broad front." Analogously, Gates thinks, a number of diverse hominids contributed to the diverse human stocks that still survive. Dryopithecus and its relatives of Miocene and Pleocene age from Europe, India and East Africa are supposed by Gates to be ancestral to man and to have more nearly approached the erect posture than do the great apes, another line of descent from the Dryopithecids. A number of rather close resemblances between gorilla and man might thus be cases of parallel evolution. Gates places the Tarsier much farther back in the genealogy. The fossil hominids come in for fairly detailed treatment, a well-deserved tribute to the great work of Dr. Broom and his colleagues. The hominids are reviewed in a chapter of forty pages with illustrations and then Gates studies head form. The alleged effects of migration from parts of Europe to America, he rightly says, have not been substantiated, but some changes of growth are claimed for children of Japanese migrants to Hawaii.

All early men, Gates thinks, were long-headed; brachycephaly has arisen probably independently in various cases and has spread through repeated mutations. Brachycephaly is usually a dominant character when